

Bard

Bard College
Bard Digital Commons

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

12-2014

decB2014

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "decB2014" (2014). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1368.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1368

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

Bard

= = = = =

**Wer-beast gladly-eyed
finally laughs — ah
know you man now**

**as if a tower'd fallen
and a mister rose.**

**We are no bearer
than what we her.**

5 December 2014

THE LESSON FOR DECEMBER

1.

Having written one word
write the other.

The one that loves you
coming close to your untouched
skin a marvel of
imagistic transparency.
Everybody understands the hand.
Take care of this, the famous
church, the steeple,
open door, the people.

It is no different from the stone
or a magpie, not different
not the same, the wind
brought you to your mother's womb
your father thought he was a ray of light.
Sun maybe, a lemon, an Italian,
a hand cart in a coal mine, deep.
But he too was wind, a miracle
when you think about it and I
think about it all the time.

2.

History books are bound in blue,
have you noticed, and money books in red.

I grew up handling things until
color got the best of me and I saw,
just saw. So little to go on,
likenesses, old Irish tunes,
the taste of oatmeal, honey under.
It was enough to grow a life, a library,
an outfield and no bases, chemistry
deep in your pocket, you were a priest
one after the order of Melchizedek
ever after, these
words you understood. Write them down
and watch the shadow that they cast,
and follow the shadow word by word still.

3.

Pirouette the long skirt twirled at her ankle,
your rifle almost tall as your shoulder.
There has to be a war. Always. The moon says so
the old man said, the teacher, the stranger.
From *strand* the beach or border, the edge, we call
him a *stranger* who crosses it and comes to us,
knife in hand or thought in mind, all strength
we have comes from what is not ours.
The other waltzes in and teaches us to be.
That is the riddle of ontology
a being cannot be a being by itself alone.
Identity is emptiness, the void. The gap, the yawn
you half suppress and still keep reading on.

4.

Strange document he called his own —
3000 pages in six volumes and not a word in it
in any Christian language, but all of it
was about him, just him, no word
he could read, no story for you to follow
either, pirates or lovers, bandits
in the Abruzzi, senators of ancient Rome.
The old queen was dead — that's all he knew,
we survivors milled around in the mall, wept
self-consciously in half-finished cathedrals.
Not even stone is really done. Are you
still following your shadow, daughter of Iblis, butterfly?

5 December 2014

= = = = =

**The congregation smiles,
its feathers smooth. Scales
on the skinny legs —
we all serve functions as
part of the big animal.**

**Some call it God, others prescind
the Operator from the Operation
and save the G- word for the former,
in luminous ignorance
no need to decide. Worship
deeply whatever comes to mind.**

6 December 2014

= = = = =

**Rain is such an honest thing,
a paradise of touch
in all the glib democracy of wet.
And if you love me let me be rain.**

6 December 2014, Boston

= = = = =

1.

Rejected by weather, the mind
resorbed in piety — trust
in the reality of the other — *pietas*
loses touch with itself. *Listen*
tell it. *Listen till it speaks.*
Tell it that, believe it
when you say it. Crockery
smashed on the piazza,
church full of smoke,
am I holy too?

2.

Mirador a place
inside a woman's mouth
where the truth is obvious,
gleaming like teeth.

3.

Other speculations are possible.
Look closely into the mouth
of the Talking Other. Note
the moist glisten on the curled tongue —
some mouths don't do that.
The real meaning of any word

**is what it makes the mouth do
when you speak it, and, or,
what it makes your mind do
when you watch attentively
the mouth of the Talking Other speak it.**

**4.
At least this is a beginning.
Philosophy always comes first,
the world is what you believe
plus what happens.**

**There is no exaltation
to be found in Not-Being
as the Lady points out to
the agent spoken by Parmenides,
who would (in English) call
himself I, a young man
at the best of times.**

7 December 2014, Boston

= = = = =

Far from the world
a tube of atmosphere
inflated:
 dream
is a commerce of its own.

I screamed and didn't wake,
screamed again, kicked out
and went on sleeping.
Only you in bed with me
were troubled by
this unknown tragedy.

How like this is
to war and madness,
we all endure
what other people dream.

7 December 2014, Ludlow

FOOD COURT

**Thruway rest stop.
Oily paper food scraps.
Somehow we all wind
up like wounded birds.**

**Never leave uneaten
what God has given.
He sends his raven
to every desert, feeds
us securely well beyond
our own intentions.**

7 December 2014, Ludlow

= = = = =

1.

Gentle recovery system
heaven on earth
try harder with your mandolins
the car is in the shop
a cure for winter never come
home is where the roads cross
no roads cross
it's always further at night,
the broken headlight
scum of roadside picture postcard—
sleep late into savagery
ordinary daylight.

2.

Predisposed to doubt
a man's always waiting —
we let things fall because we care,
the ridge goes up abaft our house
the dog is sick—

is that Orpheus enough for you
you wicked pretty leaves
who tear the song apart,
my little everlasting breath?

3.

But the Hurrians came
and the Hittite elders
and carved the hillsides into books
we're bound to read,
as if all poetry is just recovering
from the other time, some other song.

4.

I flew over the Black Sea
saw to my right wing
those Mongol Swedes they call Russians
and my left wing dipped towards Anatolia,
Fatbelly Hill where the stones
still keep the old palaver fresh.
We talked in signs before the words,
we talked in moan and shiver,
sigh and sob and touch me mother
I am the unborn the lost light —

then all the carvings on the upright stones
one day turned into faces
and we were.

5.

Learn when you talk
to let,

let the back of the mind in
and the tip of the tongue

the unremembered,
tell.

I think the stone was saying that.
Not much is lost if not,

a stone is always talking —
that was my Leipzig moment,
Bach's harmony in the empty church —
a schoolboy practicing his fugue.

6.

We call them ghosts when they're people,
songs when they're words.
They rule the world without our knowing it —
or they are our knowledge,
they are all we ever have left.

7.

Do you hear music?

I hear men breaking stone.

Trolls in the cellar,

the old walls —

they watched Chateaubriand

when he rode by

on his way to the forests of Ohio —

the old wall is where they live,

on quiet winter nights

I hear them breathing down below

under the woodwork of what

I dare to call my house.

8 December 2014

= = = = =

Noon riding
ice on everything
the connoisseurs of catastrophe
await their curtain call
everything that happens hurts somebody,

that's the rule,
final chorus,
Rossini *accelerando*,
the kind of weather that would wake the dead.

9 December 2014

= = = = =

**Metablossoming nakedness
unspool the light until
things go there
into dense air as
if we belong to it.**

9 December 2014

= = = = =

**You say what you are never feeling—
that could be the Irish thing,
a Tinker's prophecy, a mermaid's kiss,
or the silky silence of the fur of seals
your ancestor, your quiet mother,**

**but whatever, you fold the *matter*
somewhere in your heart, you tell
everything but what's the matter,
everything but what you mean—**

**and rightly so. For who
is any one of us to have
a meaning or a feeling,
aren't we just what happens too?**

**9 December 2014
End of Notebook 372**

READING PARMENIDES

And getting it all wrong,
by necessity wrong
since we understand neither text nor context
so the words float
in the mere currents of our thought,

but let us live with Fragment 8 a while
and be its children
drink tea in its shadow
listening to what it seems to say

8.1 There is still left a single story

and then we faint with pleasure
as if we had suddenly seen all the Greek plays at once
and saw the people behind the characters
and wiped the blood off Agamemnon's chest
but slept with Clytemnestra anyhow, yes, we, we did
and all that done, well or ill, and still
left us a single story

8.2 of a way, that it is.

and because it is
it surely goes there
where we must go,

one road, one story, one,
but suddenly a fear:
could story just mean word,
just something somebody said,
not a story, doesn't a story
exist before its telling,
some practice carried forth
before we knew to speak it,
a hand reached out,
a pomegranate grasped, a sword let fall?

Or is there no story but what is told,
and you can tell it too,
because a way exists, a way is, and

On this way there are signs
God gave us signs
God save us from the signs

in this world
there are nothing but signs
and who shall read them
the dark of prophecy the dark of priests
lit by the flash of light
the passing Vestal, her ankles in twilight

What can I know?

8.5 Nor was it ever nor will it be, since it is now, all together,